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Two Fancies

AND OTHER POEMS

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TWO FANCIES

AND OTHER POEMS

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TWO FANCIES

AND OTHER POEMS

By WILLIAM GRAHAM

AUTHOR OF

"'NEATH SOUTHERN SKIES, A TALE OF BIARRITZ AND THE PYRENEES"

LONDON

KEGAN PAUL, TRENCH & CO., 1, PATERNOSTER SQUARE

1883

LOAN STACK

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DEDICATED BY A BYRONIAN,

WITH PERMISSION, TO THE CHIEF OF BYRONIANS,

MR. ALFRED AUSTIN,

IN TOKEN OF ADMIRATION OF HIS NOBLE DEFENCE

OF

BYRON'S MEMORY AGAINST THE HARPIES

WHO ASSAIL IT.

AVIS AU LECTEUR.

It is with no wish to forestall just criticism, but in simple justice to myself, that I remark that, although the author of these poems has just attained to the ripe age of five and twenty, many of them have been written in earliest youth.

In justice to Monte Carlo, who has already enough sins on her pretty shoulders, I may mention that the unfortunate incident described did not take place there, but that the rash youth ruined himself at cards, not dice. For obvious reasons I have been obliged to change the scene.

March 16, 1883.

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TWO FANCIES.

FIRST FANCY.

A YOUTH had sought for knowledge deep and vast,
All learning of all ages and all tongues,
Had traversed foreign lands and in far climes
"Had made him not a stranger;" he had searched
The depths of others' hearts and, what is more,
Had learned to know his own; he had drunk deep
Of life, of love, and tasted now of fame,
And found the goal was nothing; he had plunged
Deep in the mystic wells of ancient lore,
Drunk of the purer streams of modern thought,
And found the goal was nothing.
Then to the springs of action had he turned.
Had scanned the mighty lives of those who moved
The world upon its axis, and who changed

The course of all creation as we say.
Poor blinded fools! Does not the sun still shine
And laugh at us as ere great Julius' birth?
He mused on all the human mind had wrought
In thought or action, all that mightiest souls—
Napoleon, Plato, Cæsar, and the rest,
Had ever dreamed or done, and yet he found—
Still that the end was nothing.
Yet in him was the poet's fervent soul,
That inborn joy which colours all the world
With hues of its own gladness, which can give
To hell itself a healing light from Heaven;
That inborn woe and torment which can shed
O'er fair creation its own gloomy hue,
And make this world a prison worse than hell.
Yet he was calm and happy, for he deemed
Despondency was weakness; and if thoughts
Of deepest gloom at times flashed o'er his soul,
He quelled them with sweet thoughts of the great whole,
And mused beside torn ocean's foaming surge,
And summer seas glassed in the radiant sun,
Or hoary castles of the olden time,
And mused on children's fathomless blue eyes,
And then once more was happy.

Yet, ere this calm he reached, long years had passed
In doubt, and woe, and deadly strife of soul,
And sleepless nights succeeding weary days,
Weary with unslaked longing and from war
With body wasting, soul consuming thought.
But now his foe was conquered, and the crown
Of godlike calm now wreathed the victor's brow;
And now his life was twofold—part with men,
Part with his own deep thoughts which were not theirs,
Safe in a pride of soul which was not theirs,
And calm reserve, tho' all distinct from gloom.
Sea, stars, and winds had unto him become
As things familiar, and to him they told
With mystic voice the secrets of all time,
Even as to a brother, but with men
Had he few things in common, that to him
Was but a book to read and cast away,
A toy to play with in an idle hour.
Tho' not unkind in nature, yet from men
He lived a life serene and calm apart.
But yet tho' thus alone, he was beloved
By some, for in him nought there was of mean,
Nought low or little, but this also sprang
From lack of all connection with mankind,

Above men's envies, hates, and paltry fears,
He was alike above their hopes and faiths.
In stature he was tall and slight of build,
With changeful, mobile face and deep, sad eyes,
Which lit at will to laughter, love, or scorn.
The wind was murmuring with foreboding sound,
Betokening tempest, while the youth rode on
Along the shore of his beloved sea,
One sweet autumnal day, his soul was plunged
In poet's dreams, in thought intense and deep,
In golden dreams of youth which yet was his.
For tho' he soon had learned that friends were friends,
But till their help was needed, and that love
Sung by so many bards was oft but lust,
And women cared for nought but gold and power,
And the world's smiles and tears were nought but lies,
Its worship but idolatry of power;
It moved him not, the world to him was nought,
For all he cared for was to know and rule,
And laugh the careless laughter of the gods.
The sky grew black and overcast with clouds,
A crash of thunder and a dazzling flash,
And then a mighty tempest, wind and wave
Warring together, while the thunder's roll

Beat its dread music to their mighty war.
His heart beat with a fierce tumultuous joy
That human passion never could awake,
While in his eyes the tempest's self was seen,
A longing of the soul for liberty
To mingle with the lightning, waves, and storm.
A gentle voice rang softly on his ear,
A lovely form stood by him, and with voice
Of sweetest melody she spoke these words—
"Oh, come and shelter from this fearful storm;
Our house is there, oh, pray ride on with speed!"
She pointed to a small secluded house
At some fields' distance from the river's mouth.
Her eyes shone with a light that was not fear,
But, like his own, reflected back a joy;
She seemed like some young spirit of the storm.
How beautiful she was! Her golden locks
Floating like the sunlight on the darkened air.
How beautiful she was! Her perfect lips
Disclosing pearls that seemed to shame the foam.
How beautiful she was! Her fair young face
Combining girlish grace with maiden pride.
Ah, Heaven! Could such beauty ever die?
Thus startled by the sweet young voice, which yet

Bore in it that all nameless ring of birth,
He turned, and, with a pleasant smile, replied—
"What! are you, then, the spirit of the dream
From which you just have waked me? I have dreamed
Of seas, and winds, and lightning, and a nymph,
Rising like Venus from the salt sea foam,
Who quelled all at her bidding. Here she comes!"
And with a merry laugh she made reply—
"Well, for a spirit of the salt sea wave,
I feel uncomfortably cold and wet;
And, as I don't much like the lightning, wish
I had the power to still the elements;
And you seem quite entirely to forget
That trees attract it, lost in poet's dreams.'
No sooner had she spoken than a crash
Of thunder pealed o'er rock and sky, and sea,
A flash of lightning felling down an oak
Which almost touched them, made him draw aside
His young companion, but no fear was there,
She only gave a sweet, pleased, childish smile,
And murmured softly, "Oh, how beautiful!"
They hurried to the house, an old, old house
Surrounded by tall, melancholy elms
And old world garden sloping towards the sea.

A sweet, weird, tender spot for poet's dreams.
They entered 'neath an ivy covered roof,
And thro' a wide age-hallowed hall they passed
Into a low-roofed, oak-panelled room,
Ancient and English, bearing the imprint
Of long-forgotten centuries of time.
Two men were there. On one the hand of age
Had fallen lightly, for his form was straight
And broad and manly, as if yet the fire
Of youth still thrilled his frame; his soft eyes bore
That vague strange sadness which we ofttimes see
In sailors' eyes, which seems as if it sprang
From constant gazing on the wondrous deep,
Wondrous, but awful in its majesty,
And banishment from what they hold most dear,
The other was of slighter, feebler build;
The face was somewhat worn, it was a face
Most like to that of Shelley; the wild eyes
With their unearthly longing seemed to speak
Most eloquently of a young life spent
In patient toil to reach some noble dream,
Some dream of beauty far too fair for earth,
Such as might touch a poet's soul in sleep
And whisper of bright worlds beyond the grave.

Ah, yes! the angels still can visit earth,
But when we try to stay those gracious guests
And ask them of their secrets, the dull weight
Of earth recoils upon us, and we sink
Back to its deadening, paralyzing clasp,
To be again but animated clay,
And, like the swine, to eat and sleep and swill.
They entered, and a tender smile of love
Spread light and beauty o'er the old man's face,
Then o'er it passed a shade of fond alarm,
For the wet tresses of his child bore proof
That she had been forth in the raging storm.
A sweet, clear, girlish laugh soon put an end
To the stern father's dreaded reprimand;
The guest was greeted with a kindly grace,
And listened with a grave, attentive air
To wondrous tales of warfare on the deep,
From one who fought against his country's foes
In youth, and loved to pass the eve of life
Beside that sea which he had loved so well.
And pleasant was the bright, discursive talk
With which the brother strove to please his guest,
For he had travelled much in foreign lands,
And trained his mind thro' years of careful thought.

And pleasant were the girl's dark dreamy eyes,
Which watched him with a gaze that seemed to search
The very soul of man, and bear within
Their dark blue dreamy depths those hidden things
Which lie concealed in sky and sun and sea,
And hide themselves, some few as hidden gems
Of priceless worth, in the great heart of man.
He left them, with a promise to return,
And thro' the moonlight night rode on towards home.
The storm was lulled, the stars with vague cold light,
Indifferent as Epicurus' gods,
Shed on the poet's heart their mystic calm
And deep, divine tranquillity, which he
Had reached as near as mortal man can touch.
We never quite can reach it, for the calm
Of selfishness or ignorance is not
The bright serenity of those far orbs.
They breathe an active and unconscious calm,
Serene because all-knowing do the work
The Eternal Spirit sets them night by night.
They weep not, haste not, sleep not, nor like men
Or mourn o'er other's sorrows or sink deep
In the vile slough of selfishness and pride.
The moon's pale, tender light shone o'er the wave,

Which lay as a child after fearful dreams,
Lulled to sweet sleep beneath a mother's smile,
And stars and moon and wave all breathed the same
Deep mystery of harmony and love.
He gazed upon the wondrous sight with heart
Which throbbed alternately with joy and pain,
For then there woke that passionate desire
Which thrills the heart of poets till their death,
To be as one with Nature and no more
In banishment from her dread mysteries,
To commune with the wave as stars and moon
And learn the secret of the night-wind's moan.
We pity Tantalus ; but are we not
Ever as Tantalus ? The tempting fruits—
Knowledge and immortality, are they
Not ever stretched before us, while we long
To grasp them but the more that they lie hid
Beneath an all impenetrable veil
Of the most dazzling beauty ? Do we not
For ever roll the weight of human thought
In hope to reach the goal eternity ?
And is it not for ever tumbled back
Beneath the cursed weight of mortal clay ?
Clare took his way along the sounding shore

Beside the sea which glistened in the night,
As if inspired with all divinest thoughts;
And who shall say it is not? What are all
Our pretty, changing, paltry loves of time
To that eternal love which all the years
Have never changed nor weakened, and which draws
The tender rays of moonlight to the sea?
And as he reached his home the night-wind's sough
Came whispering thro' the fir trees which girt round
The winding way which led there. All was still,
As if absorbed in some intensest thought,
Too deep not to be sweet; and every leaf,
And every breath of wind and every star
Breathed forth the most divine activity,
The activity of nature when in rest,
Profound repose, and yet unceasing life,
Great nature's mystic secret, ceaseless toil
Wrought out with ceaseless sweet tranquillity.
The air, the moon, the stars, the golden corn
Poured forth one rapturous hymn of silent joy,
The nightingale, earth's poet, spoke to Heaven
And thanked that Spirit who had given all.
"Your work is wonderful, and you are great."
Clare spoke these words of praise when he had viewed

The artist's picture, "Bonaparte crowned."
It was indeed a great work, fit to rank
With those of mightiest artists: there there stands
The emperor, at that moment of his life,
That all-surpassing moment, when he took
The crown of France from out the pontiff's hand
And placed it on his temples—there he stands.
The face is very calm, but in the eyes
There shines a steely light; the cold firm lips
Seem to press back the mind's vast fiery thoughts,
Which held in bondage 'neath an iron will
Flash lightning light thro' those stern piercing orbs.
The old world lies beneath him, and his heel
Is pressed upon its corpse; his throne is built
Upon the wreck of ancient time-worn creeds;
But thirty years of age! and such a power
As mortal man ne'er reached to, now is his.
France, new-awakened from her dreams of death,
And mindful of her glorious bygone years—
France, ever-youthful, ever-hopeful France,
Strains like a swift young greyhound at the leash
To dash upon her foes, and she is his.
And passionate desire now thrills his heart
To plunge into the strife and reach to heights

Untrodden yet by mortal man, and be
Even as the Almighty upon earth,
Surpassing far all power yet reached by men.
In that, more like the mind of Philip's son
Than to the calmer Roman, who ne'er dreamed
What cold nature reflection did not seal.
The thoughts fast crowding on the giddy brain,
The joy of youthful power, the boundless lust
Of yet unknown dominion stir the heart
With quick, keen, painful throbs ; the burning blood
Deserts the cheeks ; the face is very pale,
But beautiful in its imperial pride,
Changeless as death and resolute as fate.
"I thank you for this picture. You express,
With something near perfection, that which seems
To me the greatest triumph life can give,
That moment to which we can cry with Faust,
'Verweile doch, du bist so schön' supreme
Dominion grasped while yet in youth's fair prime.
But very few can bear it, and that man
No better than the rest. Poor Cæsar could :
Yes, he was all but perfect, but he made
One great mistake, he dared to have a friend,
Such rashness met its natural reward,

That friend was Brutus, you may rest assured,
No man of sense should ever have a friend.
You show us men but little mercy there,
Depicting what some name our greatest man
Thus revelling in the drunkenness of power;
Your work is terrible, but it is true."
"And yet Napoleon always was to me,
From childhood's days, a hero of romance.
What is there in him that one cannot hate?
We know that he was selfish, cold, and vain,
That all the blood of slaughtered hecatombs
Could shake by not one jot his awful calm,
And yet we cannot hate him, tho' we know
The tears of women and the blood of men
Found him for ever cold and hard as fate;
Yet still we cannot hate him do his faults,
But bring him nearer to us while they prove
That, tho' the politician was all stone,
There lingered something kindly in the man,
And thus we pity him, but cannot hate.
May I now show my last work? I have tried
In it and this Napoleon to depict
Two turning points or crises in the lives
Of two most wondrous men. He drew the cloth

From off his last creation, and they saw
Byron, when he o'erheard those fateful words,
"Do you think I could love that pale, lame boy?"
The boy stands in a chamber of that hall—
That ancient hall whose memory will die
With our land's language only; on his face
A kind of dreamy, speechless horror sits—
His perfect lips seem pressed as to restrain
The quiver of unutterable pain
Which thrills the boy's proud being; yet they speak
Far more than this. A cold disdainful scorn,
The deathless scorn of genius, can be read
In their contemptuous curve. The fiery glance
Of Byron's wondrous eyes rests on the form
Of the immortal Musters rendered so
By that "lame boy." His memory else would rot
As surely as his bones, but there he sits.
That man so well beloved for his power
To leap a five-barred gate; his honest face,
His honest, stupid English face is lit
With what such men are pleased to say is love.
The poet's glance breathes nought of jealousy,
Only a painful wonder that such men
Can be like this beloved, and this is joined

To utter, calm, and measureless contempt.
And on observing closer can be seen,
As in a dim far vista there lie glassed
In those blue azure eyes, great thoughts and deeds
Resounding thro' all ages, thought and done
By that pale, scornful boy, whose features speak
Of fiery genius waking into life
And cradled into poesy by wrong.
"I envy you your power, and from the world
You need to ask for nothing, your own thoughts
Are more than all sufficient to console
For any lack you e'er may feel in life."
"Yes, but life's pangs are bitter; after all
We are but men, and art cannot suffice
Ever to take the place of human ties.
Byron was not the only man whose love
Preferred a Mr. Musters, Shakespeare's Dream,
Titania and Bottom still holds true,
And women still adore the ass's head."
"By which same bitter tone I must infer,
The ass's head has been in your way too.
Well, let them still adore them if they will;
Like clings to like, and I have nought to say
Against poor honest Musters and his class,

Except they're rather stupid. Those who love
The lower, baser mind can never merit
The higher one's regard; and poets make
And artists make a very great mistake
In thus immortalizing. We must thank
Miss Chaworth, for without her we would ne'er
Have heard of Harold nor have dimmed our eyes
With mourning o'er the sorrows of the dream,
Which fortunately was a dream. Had she
Accepted Byron's love, he would have sunk
Into an ordinary country squire.
But, then, had I been in the poet's place
I would have let the fair one's memory rot,
Beside her Musters whom she loved so well."
"Will you do me a favour? Will you be
A model for my Sulla, when he threw
Aside his power thro' deep contempt of man?
'Twill be a fit companion for these two."
"Oh yes; but why take me? I do not think
I am at all like Sulla, and, alas!
Have never had the opportunity
Of gaining power." "You will; and in your mind
There is much like to Sulla. Then have I
Your promise, and for when?" "To-morrow." "Good."

Acquaintance thus begun, now ripened fast
To friendship, for young Raymond long had felt
The want of one to be a kind of friend.
His youth had met with grief, and now his faith
Was part lost in the world and worldly ties;
But yet his heart was open, warm, and true,
While consciousness of genius much consoled
For feelings blighted in life's tender spring;
And Clare's gay, sceptical, yet genial talk,
Which mocked at all things, yet withal was full
Of kindliness and a bright, hopeful faith,
And scornful hate of meanness or of cant,
Was very pleasant to him. For the girl,
She felt a kind of pity, which they say
Is kin to love; and tho' there was no cause,
For never could there be a happier mind,
She pitied Clare, and thought his want of faith
Must make him wretched. Never did she make
A greater error, for Clare lacked not faith,
Except in man, for nature and that spirit,
All-loving, all-sustaining which inspires
The humblest worm as much as Shakespeare's self,
He felt a deep, profound, and boundless awe,
And love and faith and reverence; he could lie

For hours on some secluded sea-girt rock,
And breathing in the fragrance of the sea,
Drink deep of nature with an unslaked thirst,
Falling to sleep, lulled by the wild waves' roar.
He was God drunk, saw God in everything;
And this it was which made him so despise
The petty, small hypocrisies of man,
Tho' even here he could not all despair:
His watchword was for ever "Wait and hope,"
For everything is tending to the good.
To him, this new acquaintanceship was sweet
From its associations. The grey sands
He passed on his way thither, and which stretched
Far, far away in endless distances
Out to the boundless sea, so desolate
Yet so sublime in the pale moonlight's rays
As homewards he returned; the salt sea breeze,
The dreamy painter, and the lovely girl,
Were all to him as parts of some sweet dream,
But real love he knew not. Said one day
The painter, "'Tis a mystery to me,
How you can 'laugh consumedly.' You have
No faith in men of whom you're one, and yet
You laugh for ever. Yes, my Sulla is

The only being to compare you to—
Poet and statesman, with a heart all stone
To every sorrow of the human breast,
And boundless faith in his own guiding star;
Gay with a genial, reckless gaiety,
A gaiety by far more terrible
Than Buonaparte's coldness, for 'twas mixed
With yet more measureless contempt for man.
But there is far more sweetness in your face
Than I can give my Sulla. You are not
All cold, and can feel keenly for such woes
As those you can appreciate. You will live,
I think, to be a blessing to the world."
"My Friend, believe me, you but waste your time.
My mind is not worth this unravelling;
Nor is, indeed, the mind of any man.
Away with metaphysics, let us have
But 'action, action, action,' and not words.
If I can pity some woes, 'tis that I
Can see and understand them as you say;
I laugh at men? Well, that is simple too;
The rascals are not worthy of a tear."
"But your laugh has no bitterness, and men
Can sting. Then have you never known a woe?"

"Oh, all these boasted sorrows of the heart
Make capital material for bards.
A toothache's not poetical, love is;
But toothache's far more painful. I have known
Both sorrows frequently, and much prefer
The latter. Hectic fever springs from love,
Typhoid from drains, and is by far the worse.
You ask if I have never known a woe?
Oh yes; before my mind was firmly fixed,
Before I learned to know myself, my mind
Was greatly racked by doubt and painful doubt,
But then those sufferings never sprang from man."
"Your mind is yet not happy," said a voice,
And Gertrude stood before them. Her young face
Was shy, yet earnest, and her lovely eyes
Glistened with sympathy and interest.
"Pray, why?" Clare asked her with his pleasant smile
And tone half gratified and half amused.
"You often look unhappy. No one can
Be happy not in sympathy with man."
"I am not out of sympathy with man,
I sympathize, but laugh"—thus he began,
And then allowed the girl to gain her point.
One glorious autumn morning, Clare arrived

At Melville's house. Before the door there stood
The sister, and from her fair lips he learned
The brother had been suddenly obliged
To leave his work that day. "Then have I had
All my long ride for nothing? Let us take
The boat, and spend our day upon the sea."
The girl, indeed, was lovely; and that day
Seemed lovelier yet than he had ever known.
Her cheeks kissed by the balmy summer breeze
And flushing with a tender roselike tint,
Part pleasure, and part shyness, and part love—
Love just awakening in a maiden's heart;
Her budding bosoms heaved as if sweet thoughts,
Sweet, yet tumultuous, troubled the clear depths
Of her pure virgin being, and her eyes
Reflected back the heaven's azure blue,
Which was not purer than their dreamy depths.
And forth they went upon the dancing wave,
On which the sun poured down its rosy light,
And sailing far to sea, they disappeared
Beyond that line where sky and ocean meet.
For some time sailed they silently, then notes,
The ripple of youth's musical sweet tones,
Mingled in harmony with that mystic song

Chanted in unison by sea and wave.
How happy were they both ! How happy thus
In all the joy and pride of youth and love !
Yet o'er them was a kind of sweet constraint,
And once again their talk lulled, while the sun
Shone out with yet more brilliance on the wave.
They now were far at sea ; the shore had sunk
Into a shadow, and to them it seemed
They had become one with the elements
Around them, sky and sun, and wind and sea.
And then came whispered dangerous words of love,
Part false, as men's words oft are, but part true.
We are but mortal, and so when we vow
Eternal love we but forget, no more
Can we extend our mortal passions' length,
Than our poor lives beyond the appointed hour.
But she poor child knew not of this, and dreamed
Of love unchangeable ; that words were things.
And so the old, old farce was acted out—
Vows made but to be broken, all the old,
Old sweet and silly farce once more performed
To laughing witnesses, the sea and sun.
And when the sun set o'er the glistening wave,
It shone on one who now no more could gaze

With free unshackled fancy on its beam,
For vague, sweet dreams had vanished to return
No more. The rubicon of life was passed,
And false swift love now coloured all her thoughts
And thrilled her with the memory of a kiss.
The Sulla now was finished; and they stood
Within the village churchyard which o'erhung
The sea, whose endless, weary sough and moan
Sounded thro' dim mediæval aisles, and mixed
The eternal song of nature with the notes
Of organ and the simple village hymns.
They stood beside a hoary, mossgrown grave,
Secluded in a sweet and sun-fed nook,
Apart from all the other village graves,
Recording old world calm and peaceful lives.
"Ah, how these old, old churches bring us back
With sweet weird influence to those bygone days
When faith still reigned, and science had not bared
With cold remorseless steel all fallacies,
Grown green with lapse of years, in that far time.
Calm, peaceful lives fulfilled their useful course
In narrow circles; then was half the world
In brilliant mists of fancy shrouded—mists
Which still obscure the individual mind

In childhood's golden hours and linger yet
Tho' part dispersed in days of early youth."
Thus did Clare speak; and thus was the reply:
"I love this old spot; it has been my dream
To sleep here 'neath the daisies when I die;
And if death be a waiting place, and dreams,
Vague dreams of past and future, sometimes touch
The sleeping soul, I sometimes think that I
Will dimly hear the sough of my dear waves,
That mystic, restless song which ever sounds
Thro' all the ages; that eternal moan;
That vague, deep yearning still unsatisfied,
Whether the glistening wavelets kiss the shore
In summer, whispering in voice of love
Creation's deepest secrets, or when lashed
By driving storms, the mountains billows hurl
The salt and blinding spray upon the shore."
"But, ah! why speak of death, when sweet with you
Life has but now begun? Such thoughts as these
Must not cloud o'er your fancy." And the girl
Sighed softly, while her sweet young face seemed pale
In the autumn sunset, but made no reply.
The sky had changed, the sea roared angrily,
The lightning flashed, and big warm rain-drops mixed

With ocean's surge. A youth and maiden stood
In one of those quaint, dreamy English lanes,
Moss-grown and over-arched with hoary trees ;
Beside there was a steed caparisoned,
And such the words that age-worn spot o'erheard—
Could some spots but find tongues, what secrets kept
Close as the grave would then shine forth ; what crimes,
What partings, what resolves, what trysts of love,
Tender and passionate, what dreams, what hopes !
What thoughts and actions have been thought and done
Even in the shade of far old English lanes !
"My darling, I am going far away,
But never to forget you. You will be
To me a fair dream, hardly of this earth—
A white young spirit of the air and sea.
'Good-bye.'" And a young broken voice replied,
While a fair face lay pillowed on his breast,
The words "Good-bye for ever." And a crash,
A deafening crash of thunder rent the air,
The sea rolled high, the levin lightning flashed,
And with one last embrace they parted—then,
He rode forth in the blackness of the night.

Second Fancy.

A dream of fair Rhine cities, and a dream
Of vine-clad hills and ivy-mantled towers
Of a fair city and a statue. There,
There stands a youth, his face is rapt and pale;
He gazes for the first time on a work,
Among the first in modern art. It is
Dannaecker's Ariadne, as she sits
On the fierce beast, with calm and sovereign glance,
Half saddened by the thought of faithless love,
But sadness all divine. Her gaze is turned
To the wild breakers, which have borne away
Her faithless lover. An immortal's bride
Is Ariadne now, no longer touched
By mortal follies; and she seems to muse
On men, and love, and all the riddle of things
With thoughts not all regret, but half contempt.
Contempt for man's poor fickleness, contempt
For woman's fond credulity, contempt,
Not bitter, but a half-indulgent scorn,
In gazing on those wondrous chiselled limbs,
With all their supple and voluptuous curves,

Upon those perfect lips, that queenly head,
Even more than queenly in its haughty pose,
There wakes that longing for the infinite,
That wish to accomplish the impossible,
To do, to suffer all things and maintain
Thro' all the same serenity as she,
To merit even that immortal love.
He gazed upon those marble, sightless eyes,
And prayed and prayed for love, the cold Greek lips
Returned no answer, but they seemed to smile
As if in pity on him, and to say,
"I too once learned what human love was worth.
It led me to despair; but now no more
Your petty frets and passions torture me,
I only muse in pity on your lot,
Poor human playthings of overruling fate.
Away! I cannot love thee! Go, return
To the fond bosom of thy mortal love,
False as my fair, false Theseus!" and she smiled.
Day after day the youth returned again;
The statue had become as 'twere a part
Of his most secret being, and each day
The same mad prayer for love, for now to him
It was no more a statue, but a white

And cold and pure immortal that he saw.
And did he err? Perchance these lovely dreams
Are in the end more real than are we;
And Helen, Ariadne, Venus, live
Even now, as much as in that fair, dim haze
Of ancient Grecian story. What were life?
A desert, cold and comfortless and black,
Without these golden dreams, these shapes of love,
And joy and youth and grace. A ruling thought
Thrilling thro' countless ages is as much
Real as any flesh-clothed thought of God.
Pure spirit cannot die, but must return
Back to the burning fountain whence it came,
And those fair women of the days of old,
Who charm us now, as then, with all that sweet
Mysterious influence of great loveliness
And weird eventful history, have lived,
And live, and live for ever. We will meet
Again in some bright world beyond the grave.
Again the youth came, and again the prayer
Unanswered. Then the marble spoke with words
As thus, tho' with a gentle scornful smile.
"Yes, once I loved and trusted; my reward
Was such as women ever reap from those

Whom best they love—first false, sweet, passionate words,
But only words; then passion wanes, and then
Comes coldness, weariness, desertion, death.
Or, worse than mortal death, 'tis death of all
Noblest in man or woman, death of all
Faith, love, or hope—a cruel, blasting blight
Of all the affections, turning flesh to stone
As this, my image now, and thus I died,
When Theseus left me lone ere yet I learned
To scorn both him and thee, and all mankind."
And majesty shone forth in her regard
Cold, calm, and cruel. "Mortal, who art thou
Daring to seek love from a goddess? Go,
Presumptuous one, back to thy fellow worms!"
Then anger flushed his cheek, and all love left
His soul, as thus he made a stern reply,
Reply thrice haughtier, sterner than her own:
"I am thy equal, and tho' mortal now
As once thou wast, I bow to neither thee,
Nor aught in earth, or heaven, or hell; a soul
Firm, self-sustaining, fearing not the crash
Of nations or of worlds, and calm beneath
All woes of earth or shocks of careless fate,
Such soul is godlike, and for him doth death

Exist no more, for him there is but one
Great all-pervading Spirit, nor need he
Cringe at the arrogance of such as thee."
Then womanlike and doglike both but flee
From such as seek them, while they kiss the hand
Of him who strikes them; the cold, firm Greek lips
Relaxed again into a sorceress smile,
And with a rippling, musical, sweet voice
Like sounds of heavenliest music, or the wind
Sighing thro' pines at eve; a voice which seemed
Not of this earth, and yet which seemed to speak
Of all we most can yearn for as the waves
On dreamy summer days, sad, yet most sweet;
Or, as the eyes of children when their souls
Are touched by memories of some past life
Purer than this, but whose remembrance fades
In manhood's press and noontide—thus she spake:
"Ah, leave me not in anger, for I am
A woman, tho' a goddess, and I love
Such as can dare disdain me; I will tell
My history since thou wishest, but a tale
Repeated since so ofttimes on the earth.
My sire was King in Crete, and year by year
Twice seven captive youths and maidens gave

To the fierce Minotaur. It fell one year,
There came amongst the band a youth, whose face
Was as the Sungod's; and his noble form
As that of Herakles his trusted friend,
But bore a nameless tender grace which lacked
The mighty Demigod. His being seemed
Formed both for love and war, as if the child
Alike of Mars and Venus. When I looked
Upon the glorious youth, whose wondrous eyes
Flashed and yet softened as they met my gaze,
My heart was moved in pity for his lot—
Ah, more than pity, then 'twas first I knew
The dawnings of young love. The god of fire,
Hephæstus, had bestowed on me a clue
From out the winding labyrinth where dwelt
The monster, and a sword; and taking straight
The youth apart I said, with downcast eyes,
'Hephæstus bade me, when a captive came
I judged could struggle with the Minotaur,
To give him these'; and showing them I said
'Go, and may fortune guide thee.' Then the tears
Welled in my eyes on thinking of the fate
Which might be his, and thus my words were choked.
But, oh! to see his brave young face lit up

With sudden joy ; to hear his brave young voice :
'I go to slay the Minotaur, that curse
Of all our land, for with this Heaven-sent sword
I doubt not of swift victory.' Then, taking
My hand in his, he prest one burning kiss
Upon it. Then he joined the hapless band.
I waited at the entrance of the cave,
Unknown to all ; and oh ! to hear the shrieks
From far within, when the ferocious jaws
Gaped for fresh victims. Then I heard a sound
As of fierce fight, ah, what would be the end !
At last a groan, a hideous groan, which filled
The cavern with its echoes, and then all
Was still. Half faint with mingled hope and fear
I gazed into the deep, dark winding ways
And cavernous recesses, and I watched
And watched and listened while my heart beat fast
With passionate longing ; then at last a shout,
A mighty shout of joy rang thro' the air,
And there my hero, my young Theseus, stood,
While the poor band of rescued captives clung
Around us blessing both, and as I gazed
Into his eyes, lit up with joy and love
And victory, my soul went out to his.

'Ah, love, flee with me!' said he, as he clasped
His strong victorious arm around me. 'Come!
My love, deliverer, queen! Come, come, with me
To some fair island cradled 'mongst the waves,
And kissed by summer breezes, there alone
To dream the golden hours of life away.
My life is nought without thee, oh, my sweet!
Ah, come, my queen, my fair deliverer, come!'
The low, sweet voice ceased like some murmuring stream,
When sleep glides o'er us and his godlike lips
Met mine, I answered with a sigh, a sob,
Half joy half sorrow, 'I will go with thee;
My love will be for ever.' And he smiled
And kissed my golden ringlets. Then we sailed
Across the wide blue sea, until we reached
Fair Naxos, shining in the purple waves
Like some fond poet's dream of paradise.
Ah, for the fair, fair days in Naxos! Ah,
That golden age of the world! that golden age
Of joy, and youth, and innocence, and faith,
When life was passed as in a happy dream,
Unmarred by care or trouble, ere my love
Had manlike grown to weary and to pine

For action and for strife, or for some change,
No matter what, ere yet I knew that men
Were false or fickle. But there came a time,
When with a vague and fearful dread I saw
In Theseus' eyes a weary, troubled look,
As that men ofttimes see in the dull eyes
Of a caged bird. 'Ah, love,' he said, ''tis but
A coward's part to live thus idly. Wrongs
Wait ever for redress; and I, who dreamed
To rival mighty Herakles, thus lead
A life of sloth and ease.' And he went forth
Again to battle, and each time he went,
His absence ever longer; and I grieved
And pined, but made no murmur, tho' I feared
Some other love possessed him, for of all
He was beloved, and wheresoe'er he went
Those maidens who gazed on his lovely eyes
Could ne'er forget them. And at length he sailed
Away, tho' promising a quick return,
And left me lone in Naxos. Many months
I watched, and watched, and longed for the white sails
Of my fair, false love's bark, but he returned
No more, no more! and I went mad with grief.
When well once more, and walking lone and sad

In Naxos—paradise no more to me—
I met the young god Bacchus, to whom stood
An altar, and the god admiring much
My beauty, offered me a throne in heaven.
Tho' love was dead within me, yet ambition,
Strongest of all the passions, still lived on,
And longing now to show my faithless love
How far above him was his once despised,
Deserted Ariadne, I became
The bride of Bacchus.—Now it seems to me
As if perchance my life were but a dream,
An allegory. Ofttimes on your earth,
In woman, when her first fresh love prove false,
The soft heart hardens, and desire for power,
Or wealth, or but of love—not as first
Love of the lover—wakes, and stern revenge,
For love and hate are often near akin.
And knowing thus my history, speak'st thou
To me of love? Ah, go! I know thy heart,
False as my fair, false Theseus!" And she smiled.
And thus he spoke: "My life long I have dreamed.
And longed for things which move not other men,
For they are of another order. I,
While yet a boy, did ever shun mankind,

And loved to linger by the sounding sea
And list to its weird music, and to climb
The rugged mountains, on their cold, bleak tops
To muse alone with nature; and at times
There, or at eve in hoary forest glades,
Or in hot noontide stillness, lovely forms,
With the immortal bloom of deathless youth
Which is not of this world, would flit before me,
And beckon me to follow, then I cursed
The clay cold bonds which severed me from them:
I felt them nearer to me than mankind.
The women of the earth are nought to me!
My longings stretch beyond the gloomy grave
To fair, far, starry worlds, and now I find
The fair ideal I have sought thro' life,
Wearily, wearily o'er the grovelling earth.
Oh, give me love, fair goddess, give or slay me!"
And first a gentle smile passed o'er her lips—
A tender smile; and then the words, "Hope on.
Nought is impossible to such as thee.
In some far other life beyond the tomb,
We yet shall meet and love; hope on, hope on.
For all in heaven as on earth, must yield
To him whose aim is keen and firm and bold."

She ceased. He knelt and kissed the senseless stone.
And waking from his dream he no more saw
A goddess, nought but perfect breathing art,
For the fair spirit which made quick with life
The wondrous statue had returned once more
To where he could not follow—but from him
His earthly love had gone for evermore.
A youth with stern, set face wrote thus that night:
"If I have said I love you, pray forgive;
For I have not been faithless, but I find
No woman on the earth can ever touch
One true chord of my heart. I am not made
As other men, and seek a fair, fond dream
Which is not of this earth, but which I now
Have found expressed in marble. You will soon,
I cannot doubt, forget me, but I must
Declare my mind, as thus: To me you were
A pure young spirit of the sea, and yet,
I loved you not, I love you not; to me
There is but one beloved face on earth,
And that face is of stone."
The months rolled on, the poet stood again
In the old churchyard, and the sea waves made
Their music as of yore; and as he viewed

The quaint, old moss-grown graves the thought awoke
Of that sweet, half-forgotten dream of love,
And of the spot where his past love had longed
To lie beneath the daisies when asleep.
He turned his footsteps thither, and he saw
A simple tombstone with his lost love's name.
The hot tears filled his eyes, but ah, too late!
'Tis but a simple tale, an oft told tale,
And this time all too true—a girl had died;
A poet loved and wearied. That was all.

BY THE SEA.

I.

I STAND 'mongst ripening corn beside the shore,
I watch the golden autumn sunlight flash,
Flash over mountain, stream, and sea,
And long lost thoughts come back to me—
Sweet dreams I deemed till now would ne'er come more,
'Whelmed 'neath time's sea, like wrecks those wild waves
lash.

II.

As when the world still wore a roseate hue,
When yet a name and name alone was death,
Yon cornfields waving in the breeze,
Rustling o'er sea and land and trees,
Would almost make me dream friends might prove true,
Or wilder—that a woman could keep faith.

III.

I am made one with nature. I forget
The lusts, the agonies, the toils, the strife
Of creatures of whom I am one
Reluctantly, for best alone
I live, but in this world must pay the debt
Of some past sin in some far other life.

IV.

A deep, sweet calm reigns o'er my heart, mankind
Seem far from me with all their little woes ;
The eternal ocean's hundred voices say,
" Hope on, fight on, and there will come a day,
When thy weak, mortal eyes shall not be blind
To nature's mystic secret—calm repose."

TO DIBBENSDALE.

I.

SWEET spot, where once my childish footsteps strayed,
In youthful rambles thro' thy blooming glade;
Dreaming fond dreams of wondrous things to be,
Tho' shrouded then beneath a golden haze
Of vague, sweet childish fancy. Now I see
Thy glade once more, and with a half amaze
Find thou in nought art changed, while lengthening years
Have rooted firm my soul and dried all idle tears.

II.

For since I last beheld thee I have earned
Knowledge thro' deep experience, and have learned
How all things change and perish, and that love
Is not as poets phrase it, all of heaven,

Breathing eternal fragrance from above,
But ever mingled half with earthly leaven,
Nor are its wounds eternal but to bards,
Poor frail, wild dreamers, whom no worldly prudence
guards.

III.

Yes. I have studied all the passions' sway,
And many a beauteous dream has passed away
Since last with half-shut soul in thee I pondered ;
Yet none do I regret, for nought but truth
Can e'er be lovely, and when last I wandered
'Mongst those old hoary oaks in earliest youth,
A sweet false glamour dazzled me. 'Twas fair ;
But now tho' keen, I breathe a higher, purer air.

IV.

Ev'n so it is with old and long dead days
Of chivalry, and consecrate by lays
Of bards innumerable ; ages hoar
Have shed o'er them a halo which shall pass
As years roll on ; and much of ancient lore,
Reflecting bygone days as in a glass,

Seems selfish, weak, and paltry, for thro' strife
And pain we now have gained a higher, fuller life.

V.

And even those heavenly fair Hellenic dreams
Have passed away, and now that fair life seems
But circumscribed, nor sympathy nor pity
Ruled then supreme as now ; for hard and cold
And gemlike was the wisdom of that city
Which ruled the minds of men in days of old,
And took no heed of any human sigh,
But centred all its thoughts in one eternal I.

VI.

I love thee still sweet vale, altho' thou speak
To me of peaceful dreams which it were weak
To think or dream of, for the restless ocean,
Whether in sunlight smiling, or in storm
Driving fierce surges with unending motion
And sucking to dark depths full many a form
Of loveliness and grace, has more to tell
To me than thou, and yet I love thee passing well.

VII.

As in sweet childish days, now on the verge
Of deeds which may be famous, to which urge
My mind that hidden, restless, mystic fire
Which kindled once can be extinguished never,
Till him it feeds on shall at last expire,
I gaze upon thee and will love thee ever.
Thou speak'st of bygone dreams of love and grace,
And ah! thou speak'st of one dear unforgotten face.

VIII.

I love thee still; and that weird wondrous song
Thy murmuring glades still whisper, as among
Their winding shades I shelter from the gale
Of life and dream in quiet, for it tells
Of ages past a weird and mystic tale,
Deep as the ocean's secrets, and there wells
A flood of calm sweet thoughts. I hear in thee,
Faint whispers of those things which are not but may be.

WRITTEN AT ARCACHON.

I.

THE wind is gently sighing
Thro' hoary forest trees,
A southern sea is lying,
Scarce ruffled by the breeze.

II.

But tho' on all before me
Lies calmness sad and deep,
A vague regret comes o'er me,
Old sorrows wake from sleep.

III.

Deep calm is on the ocean,
As in the heavens above,
The waves with gentle motion
Seem to kiss the shore with love.

IV.

I watch the moonlight streaming
On a scene surpassing fair,
In youth when fondly dreaming
Of aught but pain and care.

V.

Then why that half-sad longing,
Those hopes and doubts and fears,
That o'er my mind come thronging
Till my eyes are dimmed with tears?

BIARRITZ.

I.

FAIR city gazing o'er the vast
Unending stretches of the sea,
Thou wak'st fond memories of the past,
And recollections come to me,
Of dreamy days which I have spent
'Twixt sleep and waking on thy shore,
My idle thoughts and fancies blent
With music of thy wild waves' roar.

II.

Perchance there wakes a soft regret,
On thinking of the faces fair
And fresh young voices, hearts as yet
Unsmirched of my companions there.

Thro' days of happiness I've dreamed
Beside that ever-sounding wave,
When o'er calm seas the dear sun beamed,
Or 'gainst huge rocks the breakers rave.

III.

Oh, dear to me, in storm or calm !
Great ocean, am I not thy child ?
O'er all my woes thou pourest balm ;
I glory in the struggle wild
Thou wagest 'gainst the raging storm ;
I love to watch thee softly smiling,
Give birth to many a lovely form,
As deadly fair and as beguiling

IV.

As ever Venus when she rose
From out the salt wave pure and white,
Tho' beings of the mind are those
Too purely, beautifully bright
E'er to be mortal, tho' they blend
With frail mortality, they bear a hue
Not of this earth, but wait the end.
Perchance thy dreams may then prove true,

V.

Fond dreamer, and the waking vision
Perchance deceives us while we see,
In these sea-dreams a faint prevision
Unfolded in eternity.
And could we now but learn the burden
Of those deep secrets, the wind's breath
For ever chants with thee, the guerdon
Were ours of thought, of life, of death !

PAU.

I.

GEM of the south! Thou white town shining
Like some fair paradise upon thy hill;
On thee I scarce can think without repining
For fair, bright days, when free from earthly ill,
My heart was fresh with hopes which years advancing
kill.

II.

When yet I knew not disappointment's breath,
Nor yet had I been taught that friends are friends
But till their help is needed, and that death
Is man's best friend, and while his way he wends
To that last bourn, that sleep alone from woe defends.

III.

Ah! when I think upon those mountains,
So grandly looming in the haze

Of purple distance, then the fountains
Of memory are loosed, and days
Of joy and youth return; once more on them I gaze.

IV.

Again I wander in some moss-grown lane,
Or in your quaint old streets and castle muse,
On those fair bygone days, ere yet the bane
Of too much knowledge cursed us, o'er which hues
Of Time's first dawn a mild and heavenly light diffuse,

V.

Till the old dead time seemed to live once more
Thro' deep and earnest thought; and mail clad knight
Girt on again the harness which he wore
Of old, when riding onward to the fight,
And death sprang into life from dark oblivion's night.

VI.

Oh, snow-clad peaks! Oh, age-worn castle old!
Oh, green woods, where with maidens fresh and fair
I dreamed thro' golden hours! Shall I behold
Again your loveliness, and free from care
Escape from these cold climes and breathe that fragrant
air?

ARGELÈS.

I.

THERE stands a hoary castle,
On a rock in a mountain vale,
And of stern old days now gone for aye
It tells an old-world tale.

II.

But the mountain valley passed,
And castle there meets the eyes,
A sight which brings the yearning tears
A dream of paradise.

III.

For the age-worn tower keeps guard and watch
O'er a flowery vale of bliss,
Of smiling meadows and brooks and trees,
Blessed by the dear sun's kiss.

IV.

And a Pyrenean village;
What memories half of pain!
What thoughts of the sweet days dead and gone
That dream brings back again!

V.

Oh, blissful little Eden!
Half hid 'neath many a grove
Of pines which gird thy mountain's sides,
Protecting thee in love.

VI.

I think of a southern spring time,
When with fresh young hearts 'twas spring—
Young hearts that perchance since that tender dawn
Have bled with many a sting.

VII.

Have tasted of disenchantment,
Or perchance from the right have erred,
Or have drunk of the bitter tho' healing draught
Of youthful hope deferred.

VIII.

I think of a fond youth dreaming
Fair dreams decked in poesy's hue,
And tender love words whispering,
A love he deemed was true.

IX.

But now he has learned that passion
Is changeful as sea or moon,
That hot vows breathed in life's first dawn
Are forgot ere manhood's noon.

X.

Ah ! now he has learned that nothing
Which is ever done under the sun,
Can matter much, for soon or late
Our earthly race is run.

XI.

That regrets are unavailing,
That the past can ne'er return ;
A lesson, strangely simple,
And yet so hard to learn.

XII.

For here we are but as children,
And sport in our idle play,
With dangerous tools that perchance may cut
Our silly hands some day.

XIII.

But, yet! how sweet to wander
With blithe heart over flowery mead
Or snow-clad peak, where'er the wish
Of youthful fancy lead!

XIV.

To watch the sunlight setting
On pure eternal snows,
While a holy peace reigns over all,
As the sweet day nears its close!

XV.

Or to see the moonlight gilding
The peaks, while the southern wind
Blows soft on the cheek and with gentle breath
Breathes deep calm on the mind.

XVI.

When the struggling sob is scarce repressed,
As the passionate wish is felt,
To be free from the bonds of grovelling earth
And in nature's self to melt.

XVII.

And 'mid the gentle languor
And hush of the southern eve,
To watch a gentle cheek grow warm
A gentle bosom heave.

XVIII.

Adieu, fond recollection!
That ever my soul must keep,
Until the eyes at length are closed
In the last unending sleep.

"Eheu fugaces! posthume, posthume labuntur anni!"
HORACE.

BENEATH this oak tree, old and hoar,
I muse on happy days of yore,
And golden dreams to come no more—
Eheu fugaces!

For 'neath its overarching shade,
I whispered first to gentle maid
Of love and passion ne'er to fade—
Eheu fugaces!

Alas! those joys have passed away
With life's bright spring time, blithe and gay;
Ah, love and youth have gone for aye—
Eheu fugaces!

I sit now silent, sad, alone;
The breezes' weird and mystic groan
Tell but of loves long dead and gone—
Eheu fugaces!

And o'er me comes a weary pain,
Whilst brooding o'er the past again,
Ah, fool! thy yearning is in vain—
Eheu fugaces!

The young, the beautiful, the brave,
Swept o'er by Time's remorseless wave,
Canst thou recall them from their grave?—
Eheu fugaces!

For ever onward flow Time's stream,
And yet it seems so hard to deem
That love and youth are but a dream—
Eheu fugaces!

THE WINDS' SOLACE.

A YOUTH looked out one calm autumnal night,
  Gazing upon the coldly shining stars,
Which met his eyes with vague mysterious light,
  As when they shone on nations and on wars
Of old, when heroes fought and poets sung
With faith, when yet this weary world was young.

His mind was racked with doubt, his breast with pain,
  Gone, gone ! were all the generous golden dreams
Of youth and early manhood, for the bane
  Of disappointment had dispelled their beams,
And made his heart sick ; 'neath its blighting breath,
He almost longed for cool, still, dreamless death.

The world had known him not, but yet till now
  This had not moved him, for the immortal power
Within gave hope divine : serene his brow
  Was ever, and the sight of sea or flower

Woke a most heavenly rapture in his heart—
He lived with men, yet lived a life apart.

A spirit life apart, for well he knew,
  His joys and sorrows were alike unknown,
Unpitied, saving by the immortal few.
  He locked them in his breast and lived alone,
While from the vain sad toil of men he fled,
To seek for refuge with the mighty dead.

Yet in life's spring-time had he dreamed of fame;
  Not of such fame as vulgar souls desire,
To rule a nation or to found a name,
  His soul was filled with Genius' sacred fire,
He longed to wage a fierce titanic strife
With sin, and lead mankind from death to life.

But hate and calumny, mistrust and sneer,
  Had been till now his labour's only crown,
And now he doubted with a sickening fear,
  Which knit his eyebrows in a sullen frown;
No longer could he nerve his strength to bear:
To doubt itself is Genius' last despair.

The weird sweet melody of soft night winds,
  Murmuring through ages amongst forest trees

Eternal harmony, loosed the chain which binds
  Mankind to its own petty thoughts; the breeze
Which fanned his cheek and cooled the brain o'er-
  wrought,
Gave dream and restfulness to o'erworn thought.

But yet that mystic sound was wond'rous sad;
  Now rising high as if with tender longing,
It wailed o'er hopes and young lives fond and glad,
  Now sinking as if soft regrets came thronging
For peoples, thoughts, and ages, bright and fair,
Passed long ago to shadowy realms of air.

The dream passed from his mind, the blissful sense
  Of liberty from carking doubt and care
Passed. There usurped his soul a wish intense
  To learn the winds' deep secrets, and a prayer
Burst from his lips, a passionate longing cry
Sprang forth into the deep blue vault on high.

"Oh, winds! tell me your secrets, spurn me not!
  Oh, hear the prayer of a heart almost riven!
Tell me if all in vain has been my lot,
  In vain my hopes, in vain have I then striven?
Ah, tell me something, but a word of rest,
To still the waves of anguish in my breast."

But yet there came no answer, and he cried,
  "Ah, speak to me! Ye know from childhood's days
To you far more than man am I allied.
  Ah, speak to me! In that dim golden haze,
I shunned mankind with all their sin and wrong,
To listen to the waves and ocean's song.

"Oh, speak to me! I ask again, and one
  Who never bowed his head to man now cries
To his great mother Nature as a son.
  Shall he receive no answer? Shall his sighs
Be spent in vain, and may he never seek
His prayer's fulfilment? I command you, speak!"

Then answered him the winds—"We speak of things
  Calm, sad, and wondrous, thou canst never know
Our secrets; not with thought's most rapid wings
  Canst thou reach our lay's burden. Hush thy woe!
For all decays at Nature's wise decree,
And thou art but a drop in time's vast sea."

"Yet art thou not as others, for thou hast
  Genius, and thus art godlike; we have seen
Worlds melt like wax away, for naught may last.
  Look up! Thou seest the white stars' glistening
    sheen:

In Time's eternal course 'tis but a day,
Ere those far worlds shall pass like dreams away

"And countless generations of this earth,
  Now live as dim sad memories in our song;
Yet all the years since life first sprang to birth,
  Prove all must bend before a purpose strong;
That he who fain would reach a guerdon fair,
Must learn to hope and wait, and greatly dare.'

The voices ceased their counsel, and there shone
  On this man's face, a joy, serene and bright;
Despair, black doubt, and weariness, all were gone,
  And courage came again to face the fight,
To dare, to hope, to wait and waver never,
Until death close his mortal eyes for ever.

THE HEART'S JOYS.

I.

Love, pleasure, ambition, and all that we cherish,
When passion is strongest in life's little day,
Like roses of summer, ah! so must they perish;
They bloom for a season, then haste to decay.

II.

We fade as a dream! What to those who come after
The joy thrilling spirit and body-like pain,
At the first kiss of love or a maiden's soft laughter?
Our rapture, our sorrow to them are in vain.

III.

When gazing on towers all ruined and battered
By time or man's hand, do we think of the woe,
Of the passionate love, or the wild hate which shattered
The hearts of their dwellers in days long ago?

IV.

Life's pleasures are sweet, tho' quickly they vanish ;
For woes of the past time we have not a sigh,
But quickly our minds from the sad thought we banish,
That the heart's joys tho' precious, are born but to die.

TO MRS. ——

I.

My sweetest dearest friend, couldst thou
Thro' kinder fates have e'er been mine,
Not then the cruel tears, as now,
Had dimmed those heavenly eyes of thine,
Oft saddened by the sight of one
Whom stupid vice has made his own.

II.

"The pity of it!" Thou might'st well
Have calmed the soul when worn with care,
Of some great statesman to excel
In thought or action, and to dare
All things for thee: thy smile, thy kiss
Had been his highest earthly bliss.

III.

Thou might'st have breathed in life and fire
To some bold heavenward tending song,
And urged on wings of swift desire
Those high tumultuous thoughts which throng
So hotly in the poet's brain,
And fill his eyes with doubt and pain.

IV.

But doubt and pain alike had fled,
As night before the day must fly;
Sad memories of hopes long dead
Had quickly sped when thou wert by,
To those strange lands we reach at last,
When Time's far-stretching sands are past.

V.

The triumph of a fight well won,
The rapture of a noble thought,
The joy of worthy life when done,
The triumph of a work well wrought,
On these had shone a glory mild
Of heavenly light, when thou hadst smiled.

VI.

Hard fate ! That dreamlike form is given
To one whose love is but disgrace ;
Well may dark clouds obscure the heaven
Which shines in that most lovely face,
That happiness may yet await—
Ah, leave him ere it be too late !

TO A LOST LOVE.

Hamlet. "You should not have believed me; I loved you not!"

I.

I THINK of that most lovely face,
That girlish form of supple grace,
The heaven that shone in those blue eyes
(I'd looked in less had I been wise),
That smile which maddened like strong wine;
And thank the gods thou art not mine.

II.

I thought I loved you, it is true,
And almost think I said so, too—
In fact, I'm sure. We vowed, if parted,
We ne'er could live on, broken-hearted.
Our constitutions must be strong,
For still we seem to jog along.

III.

I've just been looking at a letter
Of yours; the spelling might be better—
But who can carp when life is young
At spelling of the vulgar tongue?
Yet trifles such as these have marred
A life; on me that spelling jarred.

IV.

It jarred upon me even then—
In that midsummer madness when
I fondly dreamed that each perfection
In thee was joined; yes, recollection
Of past days in my soul fast welling
Tells of the shock of that bad spelling.

V.

Like a dropped *h*, no not so bad,
For though I am no longer mad,
But in the realm so cool and shady
Of reason dwell. You *were* a lady,
I well remember, doubt who may it,
I'll knock down him who dares gainsay it.

VI.

That is, if he be less than I;
If not, why, then, I'll only try.
My loves have all been ladies, Grettchen,
So pleased with her fine golden Kettchen,
I never liked. She's nice in song,
In real life she's coarse and strong.

VII.

She thinks the pleasure much enhancing,
To pinion to her side in dancing
One hand, thus causing much vexation
To partners, while the conversation
Of such sweet Grettchens lacks the ease
Of those whose hands are free from grease.

VIII.

Oh, dreamy eyes! oh, golden hair!
Ah, gently heaving bosom where
My head so oft lay pillowed, how
I loved you for a time! but now,
I know that mind alone can please.
And thou had nought to give but these.

IX.

Then why accuse me of deceit?
Ah, no! I know full well how fleet
And changeful is mere youthful passion;
And you ne'er thought of aught but fashion—
Indeed, I wonder how we ever
Could get along so well together!

X.

No, no! Far better thus to part,
Than spoil the temper, wear the heart
With constant discord, fret, and worry,
Which our poor mortal spirits flurry
So sadly as our way we wend
To —— who knows where? but to the end.

XI.

Perchance I'd met my fair ideal
In real life (if aught is real),
Whom I, that faithless am miscalled,
Search wearily, oft worn and galled
By disenchantment, tho' still buoyed
By hope; this misery we avoid.

XII.

You're wed to one of good position
And wealth; you're like in disposition.
May every new returning spring
To both its choicest blessings bring!
He loves you more than ever I
Had done. Be good. Be wise. Good-bye!

TO MISS LAURA CRAIGIE HALKETT.

I.

"Fair Helen!" With the dangerous subtle smile,
And deep, deep eyes and locks of purest gold,
And lips as sweet as hers who could beguile
With nameless charm those warrior chiefs of old.
Oh, fair, fair form! Art thou of earthly mould,
Or of such dreams as those which people Heaven
And smile on us in slumber? for we hold
The breath when gazing; unto thee is given
That loveliness for which the soul in vain hath striven.

II.

We gaze till each sense aches with beauty, then
Our dazzled eyes, fast beating pulse and heart,
Oppressed with too much splendour, tell how men
From all that life holds dearest bore to part

For one fair face; for now we view what art
Hath vainly struggled to depict and know,
As dazzled from the vision we depart,
What fatal beauty laid proud Ilium low,
Led nations on to death; bade blood like water flow.

III.

And in those eyes the same half-weary sadness,
And on those lips the same strange magic charm;
Sweet eyes with pain half melting into gladness—
Ah, sweet, sad smile! What can there lurk of harm
In that fair dream? Couldst thou, as Helen, arm
Brave men to shed their blood for thee in vain?
And could that beauty which might well disarm
The sternness of the sternest joy in pain,
And be at once of earth the glory and the bane?

IV.

Oh, fatal, fated beauty! It is fate,
Relentless fate hath given thee this power
O'er men and souls. Ah, should'st thou learn to hate
Like she, thy loveliness, that splendid dower

Of beauty lit by genius! may there lower
No clouds on thee as her; not hers the blame
That groaning nations offered up their flower
Of youth and manhood, while swift ruin came
To all she dazzled. Why will moths fly near the flame?

V.

That fire both scorches and has scorched they know,
And feel too well, and yet the fools must fly
Back to be scorched again, till death their woe
At last may end, and then, when low they lie,
To writhe neath their own folly till they die,
Ah, then like men no doubt they curse the bright
Deceitful flame which tempted them! But why
Return with wings once singed? The cool, dark night
Was theirs, and this *once* learned say, Wherefore tempt
the light?

VI.

Cease, cease! That face with all its glorious pride,
Of genius, birth, and beauty, scarce may need
"The stuff that dreams are made of," but deride
All woes of earth. Ah, sweet! the heart may bleed

Oft, oft, for thee! Reck not of that—thy meed
Is such as waits on genius; and the star
Which rose upon thy birth still on must lead.
Nought, nought must its resistless progress bar
To where the deathless dead of bygone ages are

SONNETS.

GOETHE.

Cold, clear, majestic spirit, who couldst play
With human thoughts and passions as the wind
Of autumn with the withered leaves—whose mind
Shines forth like some clear, frosty wintry day,
And lights the understanding, while it chills
The heart's warm human blood with its cold ray
Of wintry sunshine. Thou from earthly ills,
From misery and want, couldst turn away
To make of art a goddess, and hast taught
Full many a useful lesson; not in vain
Great spirit then hast thou thy labour wrought;
Yet 'tis but thro' a sympathy with pain
And self-forgetfulness that man may rise
To genius' highest flight when cold self dies.

SHELLEY.

Ah ! whither art thou fled, most lovely spirit,
Snatched from us in the blackness and the storm ?
What fairyland of bliss can now inherit
That perfect soul, so lofty yet so warm
With love of man ? Alas ! that spirit form
Not long could shine upon us, far too fair
And pure and sinless ever to perform
The dull, cold plodding life of toil and care
And custom which we mortals lead, to wear
The chains of vile hypocrisy. Ah ! where
Is that most gentle, lovely spirit fled ?
To join past dreams of joy, past spring time's flowers ;
The sea and fire. Ah, no ! he is not dead,
But lives where calm delight speeds on the blooming hours.

BYRON.

GREATEST of England's bards save one alone!
Too soon did end that fiery life, too soon!
Ere life's hot follies vanished in the noon
Of calmer judgment, thy fierce race was run.
Bold eagle, straining ever to the sun!
How quickly granted was that fatal boon
Thou craved'st ever, in that last death-swoon
By Missolonghi ere the fight was won,
To make thy great name deathless in a field
Untried as yet! Great man, when thou didst yield
That soul of fire the light went forth, for we
Have need of our Apollo who could wield
The sword of freedom. Child of sun and sea!
My sun-god! dost thou ofttimes think of me?

KEATS.

Fair younger brother of that bard who strove
To form ideal realms of pure delight,
And earnestly equipped him for the fight
He fiercely waged 'gainst all that tyrants wove
Of dread and hate and faith; who only love
Could worship—love and liberty and light.
Thou not as he didst combat for the right;
More fragile wert thou, yet from far above,
From some high heaven of poesy, thou pourest
Songs of entrancing sweetness, for thou worest
E'en more than he that robe too oft of bale.
Thou seem'st as if a part of sea and forest,
And lake and stream; thy own sweet nightingale
Trills forth no heavenlier notes in woodland vale.

SHAKESPEARE.

THOU god of song! were all the songs ere sung
In one hymn joined, yet would they not compare
To nature's melody, nor yet may dare
Aught other bard to equal strains which rung
Thro' joyous England ere the black cloud hung
Of sour religion, darkening all the air
Of our sweet land, erewhile so blithe and fair.
Thou stand'st alone among a glorious throng
Of songful brethren, as some pyramid
In Egypt's sands. All deep things which lie hid
From mortal man, to thee are clear as day;
All thoughts and hopes of man to thee all wise,
Too multiform for merely human eyes,
Are thine, O god of never-fading bay!

THE END OF SONG.

I.

WHAT is the end of song? Is it to sweep
A careless lyre? To turn the careless eyes
From pain and grief and poverty, which keep
Back many a soaring spirit from the skies?
To steel the heart to all its depths should move,
And chant the praises of lascivious love?

II.

What is the end of song? Is it to make
A cold, white, cruel goddess out of art?
To see and know but this and to forsake
The struggling race of which each forms a part?
To muse alone with nature and to ban
All thoughts of love or sympathy with man?

III.

Were either these her aim 'twould be indeed
A grovelling art. To thrill an idle lyre
With praises of an idle, old-world creed,—
Could lays like this be quick with sacred fire?
No! better tho' all lyres remained unstrung;
No! better that all songs remained unsung.

IV.

To comfort the worn heart with blessed dew;
To hold the mirror up to nature's self;
With noble thoughts the mind of man to imbue,
And lead him to think less of place and pelf;
To light the world with radiance clear and strong;—
This, this alone can be the end of song!

THE FALLING LEAVES.

I.

'Tis come at last! Another year is dying,
His mystic skein for ever dread Time weaves.
In vain men's tears or joy, the vague wind sighing
With sweetest sadness, while the hoary leaves
Fall thick around us, and the bosom heaves
With vague regrets proclaim the end is near,
As thro' the saddened sky the swallow cleaves
His way to happier climes. Strew, strew the bier,
Ye beauteous faded leaves of the departing year.

II.

Fall sweet oblivion upon many a thought,
And fair, fond fancy we perchance have dreamed;
On many an unseen battle we have fought
With our own souls in darkness, thro' which gleamed
At times a ray of joy and light which seemed

As sent indeed from Heaven, and let fall
Thy mantle o'er some transient joys which beamed
Deceitfully, whose inmost heart was gall.
Come, gracious death; efface the memory of all!

III.

For what is past is thine, that which shall come
Is life's, and we are life's; and while the breeze
Of summer charms our senses, still our home
Is on the blooming earth; nor mayst thou freeze
The gladsome soul with terrors, but appease
Thy lust of power with what has passed away,
Or that which soon must fade, still o'er the seas
And lands we wander freely, on the way
Girt round by flowers of life's and youth's bright happy day.

IV.

Regret, remorse, and sadness all are vain.
The past is past, the future is our own,
To sadly muse o'er past joys and o'er pain
Long dead; the heart to anguish and to groan
O'er wasted chances—the eternal moan

Of all creation is a fruitless sigh.
The present and the future are alone
Worthy of thought; and that which has gone by
Has gone for ever, then let foolish tears be dry.

V.

Ah, see! the glad sun o'er the hills is setting,
To light up with fresh brilliancy the morn;
And Nature, her long winter's sleep forgetting,
Will wake to budding life in spring unworn
By those dead months of torpor and new-born
To life and joy of springtime; the green leaf
Will revel in glad sunshine; golden corn
Shall once more deck the meadows; pain is brief,
And death but leads to life, as gladness wells from grief!

VI.

The withered leaves fall thick around our feet;
The autumn skies are dim and grey, and hark!
That mystic sough, it seems to say how fleet
The winged moments hasten, while the bark
Of life rolls on to anchor—where? and dark,

And cold is all around us. Oh, cling tight
To me, beloved! As upwards soars the lark
From grovelling earth, so thro' this mortal night,
Guided by love, we gain perchance eternal light!

A MESSAGE.

You loved me not. I loved you not, and yet
We were not far from love—not very far.
For weeks we lived together; and at first
Your proud, pure face half chilled me, for I feared
To speak to you, lest haply you might deem
I valued that sweet, fearless innocence
But as those fools who think in vain conceit
That women love but brazen insolence;
And this I think you understood, for once
You spoke to me with that sweet dangerous voice.
A throb of joy passed o'er me; and from then
We were fast friends, but never spoke of love—
Nor even did I think of it; to me
You were as some fair, proud young queen, to whom
All reverence was due, who lived serene
In an olympian atmosphere of art.
I did your bidding, as I would have died

To render subject's service for one smile
Of that cold, proud pure face, which never seemed
As if it knew of pain, until one day
You told me of your history, knowing well
I was your staunchest friend; and then at last,
The woman's tears gushed forth, those long quelled tears,
Quelled by the pride of genius and of birth.
How brave you were! How kind and true to me,
In sickness or in health! What rich return
I reaped for my poor sympathy! and yet—
I loved you but as men may love the stars.
At length the time came for my last adieu.
Ah Heaven, how I dreaded it! I felt
As they of old at that last sad farewell
Of Mary Stuart; but we both were proud,
And spoke but words of common courtesy;
Then, looking in that cold, Greek face, I said,
With voice constrained, "Good-bye," and, with the hand
Of common friendship, took within my clasp
That soft, cool, high-bred hand, and then looked down.
"Good-bye!" you said; and then I turned to go.
"I'm sorry you are leaving me so soon;
I'll miss you very much, for you have been
To me as my lost brother." Then I turned,

And saw the lovely eyes were dimmed with tears.
I took the little hand in mine once more,
And kissed it as one might have kissed a queen's;
But when I tried to take my last farewell,
My voice was choked—I could not say "Good-bye."
The violets you sent me I have still,
And will keep ever by me till I die.
They ofttimes make me think of that sweet time
When thro' the long sweet summer hours we dreamed
'Mid deep, deep stillness of some forest glade,
Or on the sunny slopes of some fair hill.
And now I want to say a word to you,
Tho' severed far by leagues of land and sea.
I wish to say a word to one from whom
I never met with aught but kindness; one
Who never failed to chide me when I erred,
To cheer and sympathize with all; to one
Who never said an unkind word or did
Aught that might be unworthy,—yet to one
Who never loved me, whom I never loved.
If ever, in the course of your proud life,
You need a friend—and, sweet one, it may be,
For wealth and dazzling beauty oft are girt
With thousand dangers which pass others by;

If that false hound who cared but for your gold
Again should trouble you—then send one word,
Send but one word to me, and this I swear—
You find in me a friend thro' storm or calm,
Thro' good report or evil; you will find
In life, in death, a changeless friend in me.

TO LADY C— F—.

I.

HAIL to thee, fair maiden!
Of the glorious, dark blue eyes,
With the hues of dawn inladen,
And the light of sunny skies;
And sweet cheeks flushed like a tender rose ere the light of morning dies!

II.

Listening to that rippling laughter,
Blinded by that sunny hair,
Who recks of sorrow after?
Alas! what can men care
For aught but thee, when they grow mad with thy beauty rich and rare?

III.

Oh scornful, perfect splendour!
Oh generous, kindly smile!
What more could Venus render
To witch and to beguile?
For every high-bred grace is there, and each unconscious wile.

IV.

The freshness of life's first dawning,
That haughty queenlike grace,
Those sweet lips ever scorning
Aught low or mean or base.
Most perfect splendour of form! Most glorious beauty of face!

V.

Tho' sprung from a line of princes,
Not one of that haughty line,
Of those proud imperial beauties,
By thee is fit to shine;
Or could make men drunk as thou canst do, like a draught of strongest wine.

VI.

Alas! that beauty never
Can aught but blight and snare;
Alas! that men must ever
Against thy charms beware;
Yet all on earth must fall to those who both can do and dare;

VII.

Can touch with silken finger,
Can grip with grip of steel,
To those who sue and linger,
To those who sigh and kneel,
Thou art as merciless as is the turn of Fortune's wheel.

VIII.

Thou shouldst be sung by poet
Of soaring flight and wing;
For I, full well I know it,
Have naught of worth to bring,
And lay at thy fair feet, and yet I still must sing.

IX.

For thou, I know, wilt pardon
This my poor halting strain,
Nor will thy soft heart harden,
For 'tis thy beauty's bane
That they who know thee ne'er may know forgetfulness again!

X.

And thou, I know, wilt grant
A parting word to one
Of those thou dost enchant,
Who can thy presence shun,
But when their eyes at length are blind with gazing on the sun.

XI.

The destinies of nations
Are swayed by taper hands,
To woman's power oblations
From countless subject lands
Are offered up, and kings must bend 'neath beauty's silken bands.

XII.

Be firm and swift and daring!
Aim high! Be calm and keen;
For aught but power uncaring,
And thou who now hast been
In tender youth the queen of hearts, may be in sooth a queen.

TO MRS. STEWART.

I.

KIND heart, sweet voice, and lovely face,
Frank eyes and soft caressing ways,—
Ah! how am I to sing thy praise,
That gracious charm, that perfect grace?

II.

And yet there's none can better know
Than I the goodness of that heart,
Altho' perchance a cruel dart
Has pierced my own, sent from thy bow!

III.

What if I love? 'Tis now too late!
You're wed. A goodly fellow too!
Ah, tell me, sweet, what shall I do,
Thus tortured by a cruel fate?

IV.

Shall I go hang, go drown, go burn,
Go shoot myself?—for I can *not*
Bear this pain longer; say to what,
To what fell fury shall I turn!

V.

A truce to folly! you are one;
And he should be a happy man,
For did he live twice our lives span,
So sweet a soul could ne'er be won.

VI.

Ah! such a soul we but can meet
Once in a lifetime, for in thee
We find no thought of self or see
Aught else than what is pure and sweet.

VII.

We find thee ever kind and gay,
Thinking of others' joys and pains,
Of others' hopes and loves and gains—
But ah, thou steal'st our hearts away!

VIII.

Quite gently, slowly, softly, yet
We lose them to thee none the less,
And yet our tyrant still must bless,
Who so can smile and soothe and pet.

IX.

Who so can smile and soothe our pain,
Yet one thing canst thou not do, sweet;
Call back the past hours' winged feet
And give me back my heart again!

MONTE CARLO.

I.

Oh fairest of earth's fair places!
Blue sky and sun-kissed sea!
Sweet forms and lovely faces,
And wine and dice and glee!
Tho' 'twould seem in thy chaste embraces
No wickedness could be.

II.

Ah, naughty little charmer!
On the brink of the sunny wave,
No tempests here can harm her,
Her rugged guards would save,
She, guarded by their rude armour,
Her rosy feet may lave.

III.

Deceitful little beauty!
We cannot say thee nay,
When come to pay our duty
And thou biddest us to stay;
Empty pockets do not suit ye,
Then thou sendest us away.

IV.

Like some proud imperious princess,
Of lovers thou hast none,
Or so many they are countless,
Ah, I think I know some one
Whom like thee no man convinces
She can ever love but one.

V.

On me thou didst smile kindly
But I took my leave in time,
For I did not worship blindly
And I better loved to climb
Thy steep mountains—or untimely
Fate had lopped me ere my prime.

VI.

And I always laid on sixes,
'Tis a plan which I maintain
I will not say it enriches,
But may spare you half the pain
Of handing from your breeches
More than half your modest gain.

VII.

Now adieu, my little fairy!
For I hope not very long,
Recollections blithe and airy
Of bright eyes and mirth and song,
And sweet days devoid of care be
Awaked! nor do thee wrong.

PAINFUL RESULTS OF GAMBLING.

I.

We who have always made it our employ
To study all we can beneath the sun,
Have found that most things have some slight alloy
Of good and bad together; we have done
Most things, have tasted of the maddening joy
Of woman's love which poets rave of, fun
No doubt at first; but then you soon get tired,
And love like other things can oft be hired.

II.

How glorious the mad intoxication
Of brimming bumpers, when the foaming wine
Bestows on all of this most fair creation
A radiance and a harmony divine!

How glorious that blessed inebriation,
When for a moment we forget to pine
And look before or after, when all seems
As fairylike and lovely as in dreams!

III.

Yes! drinking doubtless is a pleasant vice,
Especially on waking up next morning.
Ah! who but those who've tried can say how nice
It is to rise with mouth and forehead burning,
And head compressed as in an iron vice,
As scornfully aside the kidneys spurning,
You murmur ruefully as one in pain—
"I'll ne'er touch aught but Zoëdone again!"

IV.

But then, I say, take every pleasant folly,
There's none as good as gaming to my mind.
Les dames are treacherous, to drink is silly,
But gaming is a vice that I'm inclined
To praise up to a point, for *will he nill he*
One oft must lose; but then there hangs a kind
Of fascination round a mighty gambler
Not found in your slow-going steady ambler.

V.

The son of Nicias, Napoleon, Cæsar,
Were naught but gamblers, tho' their stakes were high.
A lovely woman, do you wish to please her?
Well, gamble for her, dry that tearful eye!
L'Audace, l'Audace, l'Audace! you wish to seize her?
Well, that was Danton's famous phrase, and I
Who am not Danton know that sigh and fret
Will ne'er obtain the heart of a coquette.

VI.

All women are coquettes; they are the devil!
The very devil are they, but l'Audace
Will gain both dames and nations and lay level
Powers and dominions, it will strew the grass
O'er prostrate cities, only keep a civil
Tongue in your head, maintain a face of brass,
And rest assured that men are but as fools
And follow him who uses them as tools.

VII.

But then the golden rule of life is this—
In all things moderation; too much laughing

Or gaming, singing, loving,—yes, the kiss
Of love too oft is bad, and too much quaffing
Particularly bad, romantic bliss
Grows mawkish with the years, for always harping,
Upon one string grows tiresome, we are fired
With love of change; are angels ever tired?

VIII.

However, gentlest reader, we digress
From Monte Carlo and the gaming table
Enough of old thoughts in a newer dress,
And let us picture well as we are able,
That scene where fickle fortune deigns to bless
And curse by turns, that naughty, noisy Babel.
Return, fair memory of a joyous time!
Smile graciously on this my modest rhyme!

IX.

We entered. 'Tis a wide and lofty hall,
And there you see all classes and conditions
Of men and women, the unending call
Of "Faites le jeu messieurs!" is heard, divisions

Are grouped around with eager faces all—
Or most, for some dissemble, lovely visions
Of fair frail countrywomen there are met
Lingering round trente et quarante and roulette.

X.

And most we marked a band of aged crones,
Around the tables gambling, grasping, groaning,
Like terriers who squabble for dry bones,
Their cursed luck and poverty bemoaning,
And younger dames assisted by small loans
From gallant cavaliers and English roaming
From Albion's strand, to be repaid of course,
And croupiers yelling out with voices hoarse.

XI.

We likewise marked the kind of calm anxiety
Pervading all the room, and then my Friend
Essayed if haply he by a variety
Of gambler's wiles his mauvaise chance might mend,
For some men never learn the word satiety;
In good or ill may Heaven these defend,
And all her powers from ever touching card
Or dice, or sad their fate—thus saith the bard!

XII.

Ah, well! he was in sooth a proper man!
As fine a man as one could wish to see,
Then why abridge like this his proper span?
But we anticipate. Ah, well then! he,
Altho' perchance beneath the righteous ban
Of those religious, he might chance to be,
Was wondrous handsome, with the fiery glance
And light, lithe footstep born of southern France.

XIII.

And then he bore that haughty nameless grace
Distinguishing the ancient French noblesse,
Which joined to perfect form and handsome face,
Makes up a tout ensemble I confess
I think would any other land outface,
And yet perchance may oftener curse than bless
Their owner; and where'er this youth had roved
He had been feared by men, by women loved.

XIV.

I liked him tho', and he liked me I think,
I like that sort of fellow. Well, he played

Away until he stood upon the brink
Of utter ruin, not the least dismayed.
And when at last in ruin he *did* sink,
Not one sign of emotion he displayed,
But looked at me with such a pleasant smile,
As if he had won thousands all the while.

XV.

You know I think he was an utter fool,
And so I told him frankly; nor do I
Wish to excuse him, yet a man so cool
As he 'fore utter ruin never by
The eye of mortal man was seen; his rule
To keep a bold front for whate'er might lie
In store for him, he never once forsook,
Quite calm that face on which girls loved to look.

XVI.

We went from out the hot and stifling room
Into the soft and balmy southern air,
Ah! how can men rush madly to the doom
Of rashness, when around are sights so fair

And sweet and pure, where no fell dangers loom?
But then how few there are who know or care
For nature's beauties! Ah, that scenes like these,
We have described, alone vile man can please!

XVII.

My friend then said, "I've now lost every sou
That I possess." But I was rather vexed
And answered brusquely, "Then the more fool you."
He laughed, and then I said, "What *will* come next?
And what the devil are you going to do?
I can't make out." He did not look perplexed,
Not in the least, but quietly he said—
"Oh, I have an idea in my head."

XVIII.

We parted then, on reaching our hotel,
And went to bed, for I was rather weary.
Ah, friend! not till the judgment's dreadful knell
Shall wake us both may we two meet! Yet eerie
Fancies beset me not that night; 'twas well
With him, at least in mind, I thought, tho' queer he,
Instead of "bon soir" should have said "adieu,"
Did strike me even at the time it's true.

XIX.

And so I said to him, "Good night, old fellow,
I'm sorry I was harsh, and beg your pardon.
May sweetest dreams attend upon your pillow!
For you I know your plucky heart can harden
Against all woes of earth, nor wear the willow
For fate or woman, therefore to the guardian
And easer of all woes I now commend you.
I'm very sorry. Better luck attend you!"

XX.

He looked into my eyes, and with a smile,
Tender and wistful, took me by the shoulder;
A smile as gentle and devoid of guile
As that of a young child, as they grow older
Men lose that innocence which may beguile
More than all art, but then our hearts grow colder
With lengthening years. "Adieu, mon cher," he said,
And then we both went quietly to bed.

XXI.

The morning rose. By Heaven, a glorious morn!
That glad sun rising o'er the purple wave,

As at the birth of time, unchanged, unworn
By all the aeons; and the waters lave
With lovers' kisses that soft shore, and scorn
And hate and pride and fear seem far, 'twould save
Such beauty erring souls and turn to Heaven
Their thoughts, where haply all may be forgiven.

XXII.

As was my custom then I sought our friend,
And thought we'd have a pleasant morning walk
Together, for whate'er luck might attend,
Or good or bad on him he yet would balk
Dame Fortune's nastiest tricks, and Heaven forfend!
Ill luck must turn at length, and so a talk
And pleasant morning stroll with him I meant
To have, and to his door my footsteps bent.

XXIII.

Once and again I knocked, but still no answer.
"How soundly the old lazy dog can sleep!"
And then thought I, "I've hit upon a plan, sir,
To wake you up," and so I softly creep,

With step as soft and noiseless as a dancer
In sword dance, with the base intent to steep
Those noble classic features, and with douse
Of coldest water him from sleep to rouse.

XXIV.

But judge then, what was my surprise on entering,
To find those features terrible and rigid,
The healthy flush of youth and beauty centering,
Had gone, the high-bred hands were pale and frigid,
The pulse had stopped! Ah, was it death was hindering
Our friend from rising up? For there lay hid
A bottle, labelled poison, on the ground.
Oh, yes! the French aristocrat slept sound.

PAUVRE PETIT.

I.

The cheerful hum of a busy city
At night time, rang thro' the wintry air;
An air not thick and foul and gritty
As London skies, while through the fair
Pure atmosphere of Paris came
A thousand sounds of mirth, for tame
Are all towns after the wicked witty
Mistress of minds and dispeller of care.

II.

And there lay a little boy in an ingle
Of a house in the Rue Castiglione,
Cast up as the sea casts up its shingle,
Creation's weird unending groan

Spoke forth from that poor weary child,
Who lay half-sleeping 'mid all the wild
Turmoil and stress of the town, to mingle
One silent cry with the wide world's moan.

III.

For he spoke not at all, and yet asleep
He was not wholly, and in his eyes
There came a look so strange and deep,
As half of joy and half surprise,
When I spoke to him, and I could see
The whole world's mystery there as he,
Half waking up from imperfect sleep,
Heaved two such weary, weary sighs.

IV.

Beside him lay a little lute,
And the little cheeks were pale and thin,
Oh, whence sprang the earliest deadly root
Of this harvest of sorrow begotten by sin!
I stopped to gaze for a moment when
There passed with rapid steps two men,
Who as both were clad in workmen's suit
Had little to spare and little to win.

V.

But yet they gave of what little they had,
And passing along I heard them say,
"Pauvre Petit!" and my heart was glad
That there rest in the world such men as they.
But the boy scarce moved his head, "I'm tired,"
He only said when I desired
To know what ailed him; but ah! the sad
Deep meaning in his "Je suis fatigué."

VI.

Then there came a fair young girl who stooped,
And she looked in the poor little face,
While all o'er her fair shoulders there drooped
Golden locks, and with that soft grace
Of fairest France she asked if I
Perchance could tell the reason why
The poor child were alone in this lonesome place,
And round us others soon were grouped.

VII.

And the fair girl gave of her small store,
And I heard her murmur "Pauvre Petit!"

With an angel's voice; ah, more! far more!
Was this girl's act of charity
Than deeds oft blazoned in story and fame.
If ever we may lay a claim
To Heaven's mercy, then ye shall see
That girl's deed shall ne'er forgotten be.

VIII.

Then she passed with a tear and a tender smile,
And all around then gave to him,
And largely gave for frost and guile
Seemed gone from all men's hearts, and dim
My eyes grew watching. Then a man
Amongst that kindly crowd began
To question the child, and in a while
Bore the boy away from death's border rim.

IX.

Oh France! fair France! with sons like these,
Sweet France! who dares to say that thou
Art shallow, selfish, that thou freeze
Thy heart 'gainst real grief? and how

Dare we reproach thee? for I never
In our land saw such scene, nor ever
In other land than her men please
With names like shallow to endow.

THE END.

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